

## Cannot open attachments in Microsoft Outlook

**Important** This article contains information about modifying the registry. Before you modify the registry, make sure to back it up and make sure that you understand how to restore the registry if a problem occurs. For information about how to back up, restore, and edit the registry, click the following article number to view the article in the Microsoft Knowledge Base:

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[256986](#) Description of the Microsoft Windows Registry

### SUMMARY

Outlook includes a feature that blocks attachments that are considered unsafe. If you receive an e-mail message that contains an attachment that contains one of the file types that are considered unsafe, you may receive the following message:

Outlook blocked access to the following potentially unsafe attachments: [...]

Although Outlook blocks access to the attachment, the attachment still exists in the e-mail message.

This article discusses the methods to use if you have to open an attachment that has been blocked in Outlook.

### MORE INFORMATION

This security feature provides an additional level of protection against malicious e-mail messages. By default, this feature has been implemented in each version of Outlook since Outlook 2000 Service Release 1 (SR1).

Use one of the following recommended methods to open an attachment that was blocked in Outlook:

- Request that the sender post or save the attachment to a file share and then send you the link to that file share.
- Request that the sender use a file compression utility that changes the file name extension. For a list of third-party compression products, click the following article number to view the Microsoft Knowledge Base article:

[291637](#) OL2002: Attachments Are Not Compressed by Outlook

- Request that the sender rename the file name extension and then resend the attachment to you. After you receive the renamed attachment, you can rename the file with the original file name extension.

If the previously recommended methods do not meet your requirements, use one of the following methods:

- If you are in a Microsoft Exchange environment and your administrator has configured the Outlook Security settings, ask the administrator to modify the security settings for your mailbox.
- If you are not in an Exchange environment, modify the Windows Registry to customize the attachment security settings. For more information, see the "How to Customize Attachment Security Behavior" section of this article.

**Warning** If you use Registry Editor incorrectly, you may cause serious problems that may require you to reinstall your operating system. Microsoft cannot guarantee that you can solve problems that result from using Registry Editor incorrectly. Use Registry Editor at your own risk.

You can modify the attachment security behavior in Outlook if you are using Outlook in one of the following scenarios:

- You are not using Outlook in an Exchange environment.
- In an Exchange environment, the administrator has not configured the Outlook Security settings to disallow changes to the attachment security behavior.

In these scenarios, follow these steps to modify the attachment security behavior in Outlook by making a modification to the registry.

How to Customize Attachment Security Behavior

**Warning** If you use Registry Editor incorrectly, you may cause serious problems that may require you to reinstall your operating system. Microsoft cannot guarantee that you can solve problems that result from using Registry Editor incorrectly. Use Registry Editor at your own risk.

**Important** Before you can customize the attachment security behavior in Outlook 2000 SR1 and Outlook 2000 SR1a, you must first apply either Office 2000 Service Pack 2 or Service Pack 3.

1. Quit Outlook if it is running.
2. Click **Start**, and then click **Run**.
3. In the **Open** box, type **regedit**, and then click **OK**.
4. Verify that the following registry key for your version of Outlook exists. If it does, go to step 5.

Outlook 2000

HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER\Software\Microsoft\Office\9.0\Outlook\Security

Outlook 2002

HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER\Software\Microsoft\Office\10.0\Outlook\Security

Outlook 2003

HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER\Software\Microsoft\Office\11.0\Outlook\Security

If the registry key does not exist, create it. To create the registry key, locate and then click the following registry key:

HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER\Software\Microsoft

- a. Click the **Edit** menu, click **New**, and then click **Key**.
- b. Type **Office**, and then press ENTER.
- c. Click the **Edit** menu, click **New**, and then click **Key**.
- d. Type **11.0**, and then press ENTER.

**Note** This is the correct name if you are using Outlook 2003. If you are using Outlook 2000 or Outlook 2002, you will need to type "9.0" or "10.0", respectively.

- e. Click the **Edit** menu, click **New**, and then click **Key**.
  - f. Type **Outlook**, and then press ENTER.
  - g. Click the **Edit** menu, click **New**, and then click **Key**.
  - h. Type **Security**, and then press ENTER.
5. Click the **Edit** menu, click **New**, and then click **String Value**.
  6. Type the following name for the new value:  
**Level1Remove**
  7. Press ENTER.
  8. Right-click the new string value name, and then click **Modify**.
  9. Type the file name extension of the file type that you want to open in Outlook. For example:

**.exe**

To specify multiple file types, use the following format:

**.exe;.com**

10. Click **OK**.
11. Quit Registry Editor.
12. Restart your computer.

When you start Outlook, you can open the file types that you specified in the registry.

**Note** Microsoft recommends that you enable only the file types that you require. If you rarely receive a particular file type, Microsoft recommends that you give Outlook temporary access to the file type that is in question and then reconfigure Outlook to block the file type by undoing the changes to registry.

For additional information about how you can configure Outlook to block attachment file name extensions that Outlook does not block by default, click the following article number to view the article in the Microsoft Knowledge Base:

[837388](#) How to configure Outlook to block additional attachment file name

### Attachment Behavior

Attachments are divided into three groups based on their file name extension or type. Outlook handles each group in a specific way.

#### Level 1 ("Unsafe")

The "unsafe" category represents any file name extension that may have script or code associated with it. You cannot open any attachment with an "unsafe" file name extension. The following list contains attachments that are considered unsafe:

Extension	File type
.ade	Microsoft Access project extension
.adp	Microsoft Access project
.app	Visual FoxPro Application
.asx	Windows Media Audio / Video
.bas	Microsoft Visual Basic class module
.bat	Batch file
.chm	Compiled HTML Help file
.cmd	Microsoft Windows NT Command script
.com	Microsoft MS-DOS program
.cpl	Control Panel extension
.cer	Public key certificates
.crt	Security certificate
.exe	Program
.fxp	Visual FoxPro Compiled Program
.hlp	Help file
.hta	HTML program
.inf	Setup Information
.ins	Internet Naming Service
.isp	Internet Communication settings
.js	JScript file
.jse	Jscript Encoded Script file
.lnk	Shortcut
.mda	Microsoft Access add-in program
.mdb	Microsoft Access program
.mde	Microsoft Access MDE database
.mdt	Microsoft Access workgroup information
.mdw	Microsoft Access workgroup information
.mdz	Microsoft Access wizard program
.msc	Microsoft Common Console document
.msi	Microsoft Windows Installer package
.msp	Microsoft Windows Installer patch

.mst	Microsoft Windows Installer transform; Microsoft Visual Test source file
.ops	Office XP settings
.pcd	Photo CD image; Microsoft Visual compiled script
.pif	Shortcut to MS-DOS program
.prf	Microsoft Outlook profile settings
.prg	Visual FoxPro Program
.pst	Microsoft Outlook personal storage file
.reg	Registration entries
.scf	Windows Explorer command
.scr	Screen saver
.sct	Windows Script Component
.shb	Shell Scrap object
.shs	Shell Scrap object
.url	Internet shortcut
.vb	VBScript file
.vbe	VBScript Encoded script file
.vbs	VBScript file
.wsc	Windows Script Component
.wsf	Windows Script file
.wsh	Windows Script Host Settings file

The following list describes how Outlook behaves when you receive or send an "unsafe" file attachment:

- Any "unsafe" attachment is not accessible. You cannot save, delete, open, print, or otherwise work with "unsafe" files. The top of the e-mail message indicates that Outlook has blocked access to the "unsafe" attachment. The attachment is not accessible from Outlook. However, the attachment is not actually removed from the e-mail message.
- If you forward an e-mail message with an "unsafe" attachment, the attachment is not included in the forwarded e-mail message.
- If you send an e-mail message that contains an "unsafe" attachment, you receive a warning message that says other Outlook recipients may not be able to access the attachment that you are trying to send. You can either ignore the warning message and send the e-mail message, or you can choose not to send the e-mail message.
- If you save or close an e-mail message that contains an "unsafe" attachment, you receive a warning message that says that you will not be able to open the attachment in Outlook 2003. You can override the warning message and save the e-mail message.
- You cannot open objects that are inserted in Microsoft Outlook Rich Text e-mail messages by using the **Insert Object** command. You do see a visual representation of the object, but you cannot open or activate the object in the e-mail message.
- You cannot open "unsafe" files that have been directly stored in an Outlook or an Exchange folder. Although these files are not attached to an Outlook item, they are still considered "unsafe." You receive the following error message in this situation:

Can't open the item. Outlook blocked access to this potentially unsafe item.

## Level 2

Level 2 files are not "unsafe," but they do require more security than other attachments. When you receive a Level 2 attachment, you are prompted to save the attachment to a disk and you cannot open the attachment in the e-mail message. By default, file name extensions are not associated with this group. However, you can add file name extensions to the Level 2 list.

**Note** You can only change the list of files that are included in the Level 2 category if you are using Outlook in an Exchange environment and if your mail is being delivered to an Exchange mailbox. An administrator must make these changes.

### **Other Attachments**

When you try to open an attachment other than those in the "unsafe" or the Level 2 lists, you are prompted to either open the file directly or to save it to a disk. When you are prompted, you have the option to turn off future prompts for that file name extension if you click to clear the **Always ask before opening this type of file** check box.

**Note** If a program associates itself with a new file name extension, that file name extension is treated as an "other" attachment until you add the file name extension to the "unsafe" list. For example, if you install a program on your computer that uses files with a .xyz file name extension, whenever you open an attachment that has a .xyz file name extension, the new program opens and runs the attachment. By default, the .xyz file name extension is not on the "unsafe" or the Level 2 list. Therefore, it is treated as an "other" file name extension. If you want attachments with the .xyz file name extension to be treated as "unsafe," you must add the .xyz file name extension to the list of "unsafe" file name extensions.

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### **APPLIES TO**

- Microsoft Office Outlook 2003
- Microsoft Office Outlook 2003 with Business Contact Manager
- Microsoft Outlook 2002 Standard Edition
- Microsoft Outlook 2000 Standard Edition

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